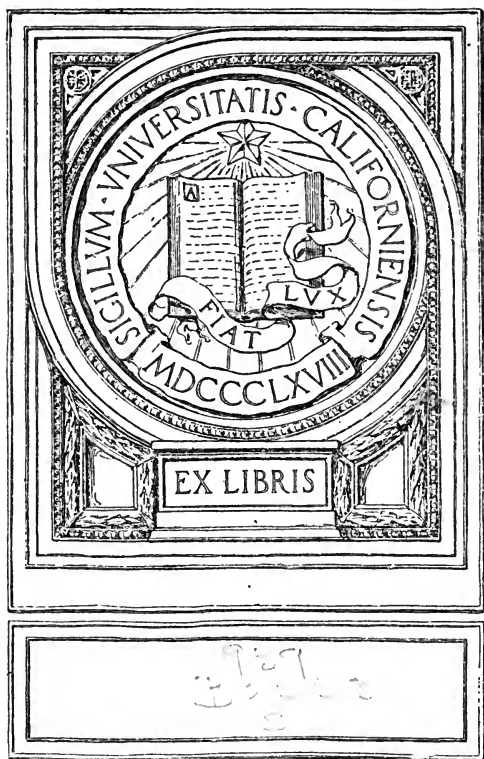


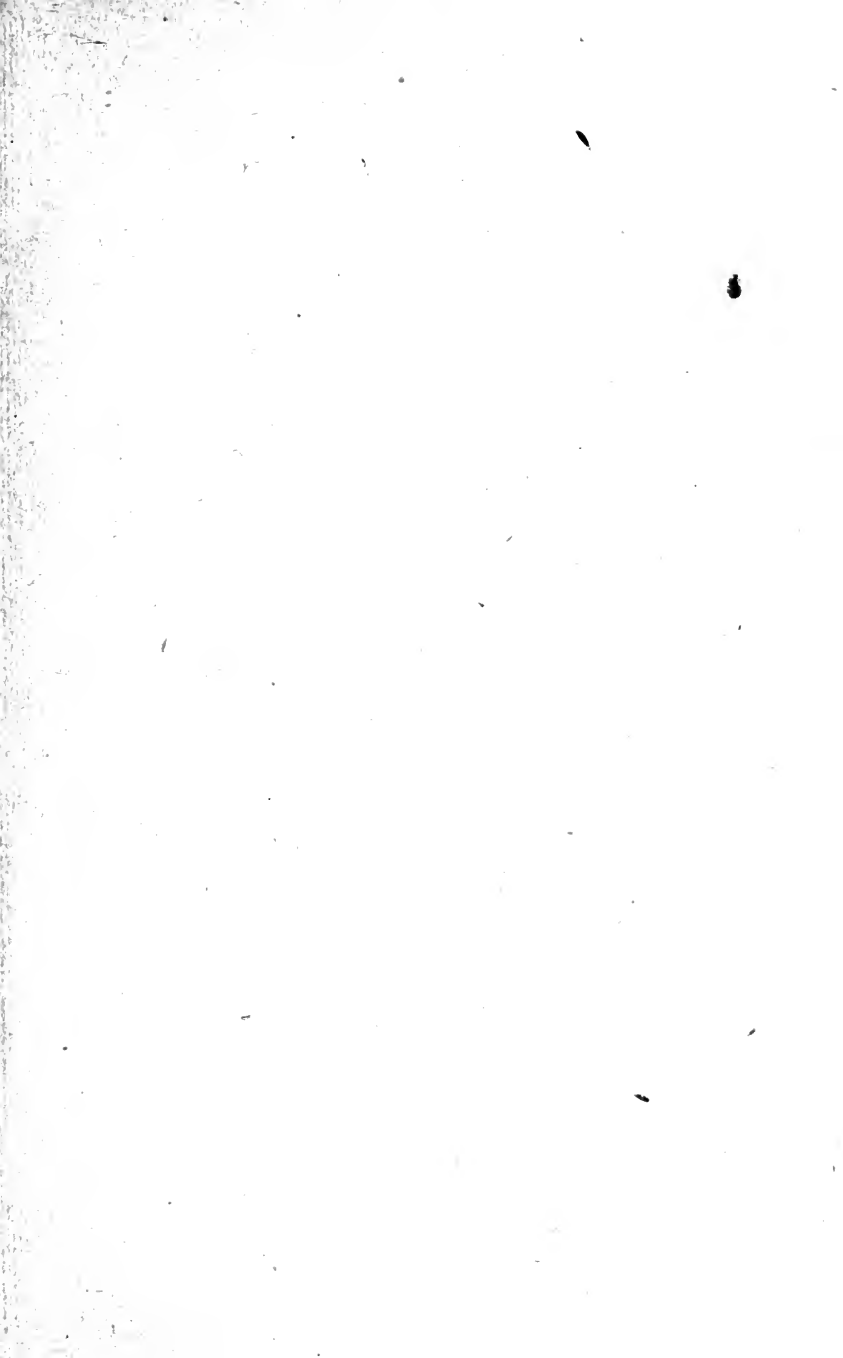
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SONGS IN CITIES AND GARDENS

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# Songs in Cities and Gardens

BY

HELEN GRANVILLE BARKER



LONDON

Chatto & Windus

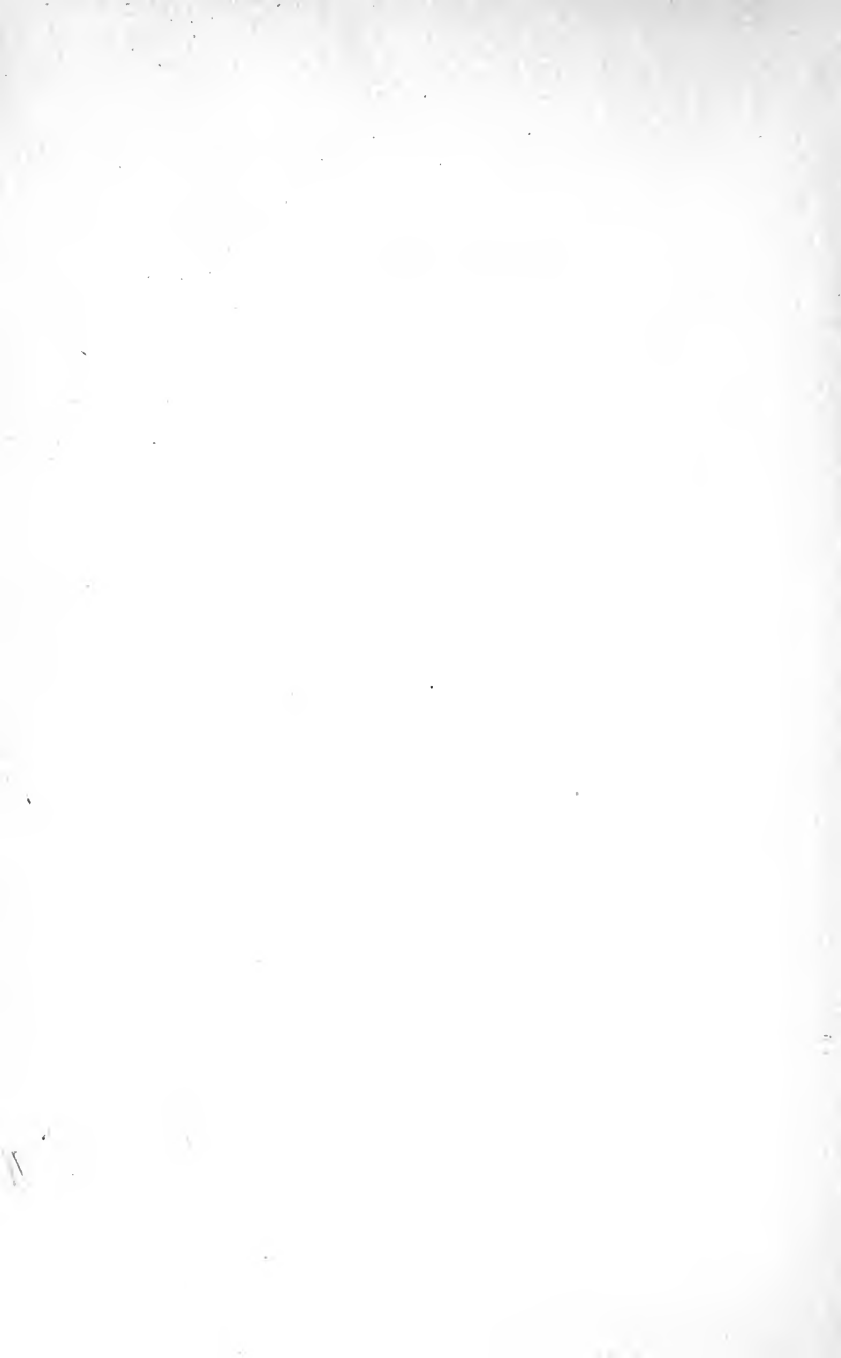
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PART I  
SONGS IN GARDENS

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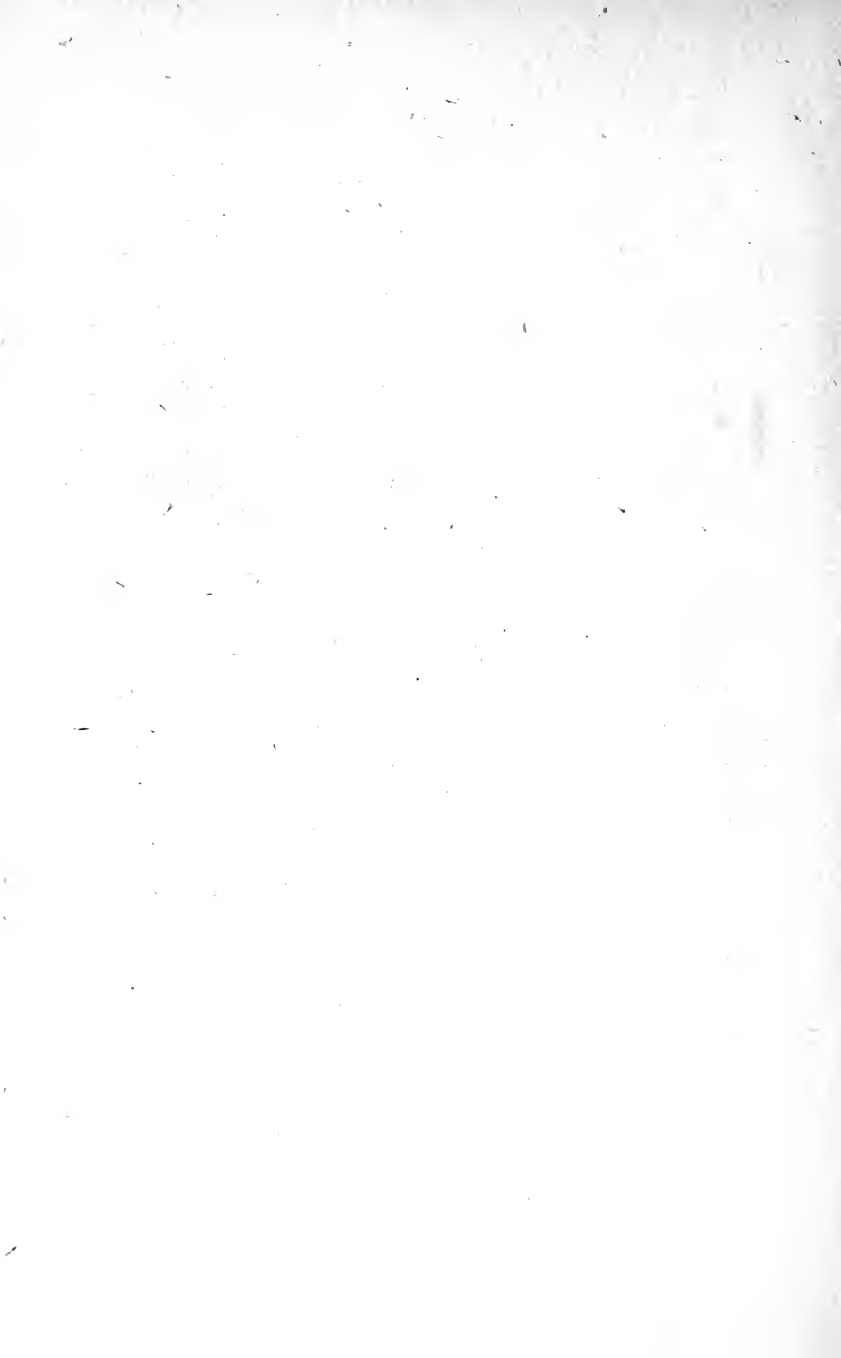
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## THE PRINCESS'S GARDEN

**P**RINCESS, there are lilies in your garden,  
Stately lilies, white as candles burning,  
Roses, and the yellow helianthus,  
Restless, toward the sun forever turning.

Down the blue-tiled walks your feet may wander,  
Where the rose-beaked parrots lean and listen,  
Where the fountains plash in marble basins  
And the fragrant water-lilies glisten.

Shade is cool for you and moons are golden;  
Tropic flowers for your delight are planted;  
Song birds, hidden in the tangled thickets,  
Fill the air with melodies enchanted.

## THE PRINCESS

I would give my parrakeets and roses,  
All my lilies, all my silver fountains,  
All my blue-tiled walks and hidden song-birds,  
All the exotic flowers from fields and moun-  
tains,

For one wild grape spray that grows untended  
Quite beyond your ken, oh cunning warden;  
For one wild grape spray — that's swaying  
lightly  
Just outside the wall that ends my garden.



## THE NARROW GLASS

**F**ROM out my bed, no park nor grass  
I saw, nor shore, nor neighbouring hall;  
But, facing, on the panelled wall  
There hung a narrow looking-glass.

In long-forgotten days it knew  
The transient shades that bore my name;  
Upon its antiquated frame  
Two crested wrens were done in blue.

At early dawn, reflected pale,  
A strip of far-off Sound shone bright,  
And oftentimes, from left to right,  
There passed a little, rosy sail,

Which I, just waked, in drowsy ease,  
Would watch with wonderment, as if  
I looked upon some fairy skiff,  
Afloat on legendary seas.

## TO SNOW

**S**TRANGE divinity of snow,  
Eager other worlds to know,  
Spotless spirit, not of earth,  
What wild power invoked thy birth?

Wind-blown from the clouds on high,  
Alien from the brooding sky,  
Thou descendest, silent, free,  
Visitant of mystery.

Thou hast known, untouched by bliss,  
Radiant dawns with rose-flushed kiss,  
Passion of the moons that waned  
Left thee pallid but unstained.

From the naked trees down cast,  
Stirred within the icy blast,  
Subtle shadows, fair, untrue,  
Woo thee with ethereal blue.

All the stars to thee have told  
Rapture of eternal cold,  
All the silent, ice-bound streams  
Made thee keeper of their dreams.

Phantom victor over all  
Robed in white, resplendent pall.  
Mighty in thy shining power,  
Dazzling vision of an hour.

None thy mystery may know,  
As thou camest thou must go.  
Fading god, by earth outworn,  
So in mist to heaven upborne.

## ARACELI

**I**N golden Spain I learned to love,  
To iron England then I came;  
And, lost within the shuffling crowd,  
I never speak that Southern name.

O Araceli ! (Heaven's high place)—  
Too sad I've grown for names like these:  
They bring me dreams of Seville's courts,  
Blue fountains, birds and orange trees.

## THE GARDEN ON THE HILL

**A**RE there still roses  
In the garden on the hill ?  
Is the West wind blowing still  
Through daisies and asters ?

Has a frost blackened  
All the heliotrope's deep blue ?  
Or are borders where it grew  
Still heavy with fragrance ?

By the sheltering wall  
Does a tall delphinium lean  
To the dial on the green,  
Where suns write in passing ?

Is a nightingale's song  
Heard before the break of dawn  
From the cypress on the lawn,  
Till the wood-pigeons waken ?

No answer, dearest !  
Only silence, and the sea,  
Between here and Italy,  
That garden and hill-top.

## THE BRIDES

**W**ITHIN this formal garden plot  
White flowers may grow alone.  
'Tis like a chapel, privet-walled,  
Where bees the mass intone.

And through the calm, secluded aisle  
By sun or moon lit hours,  
They pass, in meek, unconscious grace,  
Processions of the flowers.

Like brides, in dress of snowy white,  
All virginal and fair,  
They come to wed the summer days  
Mid incense-laden air.

The childlike crocus of the Spring  
Tells here her marriage vows,  
And here the pallid hyacinth  
Most reverently bows.

Each day proclaims a flower most fair;  
For one would wed the rose,  
And one the shy anemone  
The frailest bud that grows.

And so the candid brides appear  
And charm their fleeting while,  
Till Autumn sweeps the chapel bare  
With empty, wind-blown aisle.

## THE WAYFARER

**I** WILL reach far down in the pit of sorrow  
And gather song,  
With the bitter past I will deck to-morrow.

I will turn no cowardly look behind me  
But still fare on  
Till the glow of ultimate joy shall blind me;

For I ask no blessing and no forgiving,  
The gain was mine.  
Since I learned from all things the truth of  
living.

## THE PLAYMATE

**W**HEN I was a little sober child  
Sitting quiet, in a sheltered corner,  
I heard someone calling;  
Then there came a sound of racing footsteps  
And a wild sweet face  
Looked in upon me.  
I saw eyes of wonder,  
Lips of magic,  
And was frightened in my quiet corner  
(Frightened—but enchanted).  
“Tell your name to me,” at last I whispered.  
“Have you come to be a playmate?”

But she never answered me, nor pleaded,  
Only tossed her hair  
And smiled and beckoned.  
What could I but follow!  
So she led me on  
To gay adventures,  
Laughter and delight and childish madness.

Then there came a time  
When playing irked me.  
I grew tired and longed for tranquil pleasures.  
“Leave me now,” I said,

“ Too long you’ve teased me !”

She never answered.

Then, with doubting question,

I looked deep within her eyes

(Beloved playmate !)

What I saw there made me fall a-weeping ;

Shadowy things I saw—

And pain and sorrow.

“ We must part, before too late !”

I told her.

But she whispered with her lips of magic—

Breath like Spring

Upon my cheek and forehead ;

“ I can never leave you—

Never leave you.”

## THE ADORNING

**F**IRE ! give me of your flame

Of purest heat !

Rose, lend to me your breath

Divinely sweet !

Star, make me fair as thou

In skies above !

So may I venture forth

To meet my Love.



## OCTOBER

**N**OT happiness, nor pain,  
But just a moment's rest from care  
A brief indifference to loss or gain.

'Tis good, the Summer done,  
To cease a while from torturing endeavour  
And sit here, passive, in the golden sun;

Just conscious of the sound  
Of buzzing wasps, the smell of russet apples,  
The dead leaves dropping, silent, to the ground;

The call, melodious, harsh,  
Of circling rooks; the soft October sky;  
The blue tide rippling in across the marsh.

Assuagement now I find;  
Oh, fragrant world of land and sky and sea—  
More near to me than man, be now more kind !

## LOST GARDENS

LOST to me forever more  
The golden broom that blazed along the  
shore  
And flaunted brave in all the salt June sweetness.

Roses, in their bed of mould,  
Where clipped box-hedges bound them once of old,  
No more shed velvet leaves from their complete-  
ness.

Where mint and rosemary grew,  
Sweet-basil, fennel, lavender and rue,  
The leaves are trodden low—to ravage bidden.

Immaculate and fair—  
The walled white garden blooms no longer there;  
Lily and phlox and flag in earth are hidden.

I trod those flowery ways alone;  
The first wild joy of Spring was all my own,  
Frail cobwebs shone for me in dewy morning;

The still pond was my looking-glass,  
Ringed round with iris, moss and meadow-grass,—  
To-day whose pale reflection is it scorning ?

## THE OWLS

**T**HREE little feathery owls flew overhead  
As I walked down the frozen garden  
path;

One on the chestnut lit, one chose the pine,  
And one a twisted pear-tree, bare and brown.

There in the garden it was still as death;  
Beyond the wintry meadows glowed the west,  
Rose that receded swiftly into grey;  
The little owls and I seemed all that lived.

Softly I tiptoed near the chestnut tree,  
Two little shining, curious eyes looked out;  
And from the pear-tree two, and from the  
pine;

I fancied for the moment we were friends.

## ON THE RIVER

**T**HE forest is flame on either side.  
The misty, far-off mountains,  
Like iridescent bubbles,  
Seem tossed against the sky.

A myriad tiny, pointed leaves,  
All rose and red and amber,  
Along the dusky river  
Float noiselessly and slow.

Oh, infinite beauty, fade and die !  
Of all the Autumn glory  
I only shall remember  
This argosy of leaves.

## SONGS OF THE RAIN AND THE WIND

FROM the sleep of fever  
I wake with a start  
And a sudden rapture.  
Outside, in the night,  
(O God ! the grace  
These short hours bring to me)  
Is my friend, the rain,  
Come to sing to me.

Songs of far-off places,  
The grass up-springing,  
(Dear familiar places !)  
The smell of earth-mould,  
Salt marshes, drifting sea-fog  
And pine-boughs glistening;  
Of these the rain sings softly  
While I am listening.

So when I lie awake  
In the prison of fever  
The wind comes to sing to me—  
My old companion—

Outside in the night he sings,  
His song is for me only,  
For all of the world's asleep,  
And I, in the dark, am lonely.

Songs of the storm he sings  
And snow-flakes drifting,  
Wide fields, where once I wandered,  
And circling sea-gulls.  
He journeys free—the Wind—  
What's South or North to him !  
He sings till, in weariness,  
My soul goes forth to him.

## THE WELL OF TRUTH

**W**HY lean so long above the well,  
And strain your eyes within ?  
The west is rose, sweet Isabel,  
The night will soon begin.

The sun is gold as golden sheaves,  
The Autumn sky is pale.  
The yellow, yellow Autumn leaves  
Skim down upon the gale.

“ I lean so long above the well  
Because there lies within  
One hated good,” said Isabel;  
“ And one delightful sin.”

## IN WINTER

**S**HE died, quite suddenly, at morn.  
I, weeping, fled that house of woe  
To find without in paths forlorn  
Her little footprints in the snow.

## THE STAR

**T**HE star danced in the lake,  
Uncertain, tremulous,  
Deep in the heart of the lake  
The star danced.

But far, far in the sky  
Serene, unchangeable,  
Fixed as the spirit of love  
The star shone.



## THE FORBIDDEN GARDEN

**W**ITHIN the room for little girls  
Long time the little girl abode  
And there were many pretty toys  
And shining chains and rings and sweets,  
And picture books and puzzling games,  
And blue-eyed dolls to dress and tend—  
There played the other little girls—  
The room was full of soft delights.

The little girl was not content  
Within the warm and sheltered room,  
She dreamed of gardens all the day.  
In dreams at night she saw them still;  
The wide, far-reaching garden walks  
Where never little girl had trod,  
The velvet grass, the rosy flowers,  
The garden's fragrant secrecy.

One day the door was open wide,  
The little girl went out alone—  
How long she wandered no one knew.  
The other little girls played on.

At last there came an afternoon  
When looking up, amidst their games,  
They saw a child appear, and knew  
Their little playmate had come home.

And now, once more, the little girl  
Seems quite content with dolls and sweets.  
But, ah ! her secret thoughts by day  
Her evil, haunting dreams at night !  
For still she sees the garden walks  
Where never little girls should tread,  
The sliding snakes, the flaunting flowers,  
The garden's awful secrecy.

## TERESA

**A**S walking through a country lane,  
Teresa leaves a scrap of lace,  
Thorn-captured, ever to remain,  
Of passing loveliness a trace.

So in each place where she may dwell  
A month, a week, or but a day,  
She leaves a bit of self, to tell  
Its story when she's far away.

## THE UNSEEN GARDEN

THE song of the unseen garden;  
Beyond the crumbling wall,  
Comes wistfully all the day time;  
When evening shadows fall  
Its murmurous strain, unceasing,  
Sounds still in palms and pines,  
And the wind of the Lombard Summer  
Stirs soft among the vines.

The breath of the unseen garden  
Is more than thyme, or box,  
Than jasmine, or orange blossom,  
Or the clustered purple phlox;  
More than the scent of lilies,  
Or the rose the moon has kissed;—  
'Tis the dream that evades remembrance,  
The joy forever missed.

## SNOW IN MAY

**I** HAVE vanquished the law of the hours  
And broken the bars of Spring:  
White I came to the whiter flowers,  
And a word from the clouds I bring.

To die on a hyacinth's breast,  
And quench my longing there ;  
Untimely storm has heard my behest,  
I have conquered the paths of air.

Softer than wing of the moth,  
Lighter than kiss of the bee,  
I touch her petals in lover's troth,  
And perish in ecstasy.

## THE POET

**D**ISTRAUGHT, half - puzzled by the  
doors that close  
Abruptly in his face,  
Bewildered where the tide of traffic flows;  
Like one of other race:

Unmindful of the hours or of the day,  
Or those who mock afar,  
He dreams forever of the rose in May  
He sees the evening star !

## IN THE WILDERNESS

**O**NE windless morning, up where the Lake  
is lonely  
I paddled slowly, looking for waterlilies.  
When I saw them, deep in the cool blue water  
I thrust my hand, the silvery stems uprooting.  
Mine at last ! and a sun-flushed face I buried  
Deep in fragrance, waxen and snowy-petalled.  
Golden-hearted, lilies for Sultan's ladies—  
Drugging my senses to a deep oblivion !

At noon, among the ferns and the bracken sitting,  
Where the forest lane is warm in September  
sunshine,  
Near the path where moccasin flowers are  
growing,  
Where fire-weed burns, and blackberry vines  
cling, strangling,  
Round the straight and slender trunks of the  
saplings,  
There came, unbidden, stealing away my spirit,  
A sense of life ; it seemed its evasive secret  
Was mine an instant there in the flashing sun-  
shine.

Between the tall, black branches of forest pine-  
trees

I saw, at night, the stars in their calm celestial ;  
Too cold they seemed, too pure to be apprehended,

Too fair they shone there—caught in the pine-  
tree branches.

With beating heart I went to the fire-lit cabin,  
I could not look unmoved upon those shining  
Midnight stars, for clear in their changeless  
glory,

I read of love—its need of infinite heavens.

## LAND

**B**ACK to my mother, the Earth,  
From that stranger, the Sea;  
Deep in the hills to have birth,  
In the fields to be free;  
Free from the fretting of wave,  
From the hissing of foam,  
And fears of a fathomless grave;  
I am home, I am home !

Peace of the islands once more,  
With the scent of the sod,  
Dwellings of men on the shore,  
And the forests of God.  
Safe from the dead of the deep,  
From its drunken embrace,  
Earth, in your arms I may sleep !  
I am back in my place.

## CECILIA

**I** HEADED not the bursting of the buds,  
Nor yet returning swallows on the wing,  
Nor yet the longer afternoons—but then  
Cecilia passed; and then I knew 'twas Spring.



## THE MIRROR

I LOOKED in my eyes  
And there saw, hovering,  
The frightened ghost of childhood—  
“Woman, Stranger,” it whispered;  
“Remember me, among the dandelions,  
So eager, soft and dutiful,  
So full of dreams—  
What of you, sweet, tall one ?”  
I was silent.  
I could not speak to the little innocent ghost.

## THE ORCHARD

THE orchard grows beside the Sound.  
In Spring I see its flowering trees  
Against the waters, wide and blue,  
That ripple in the April breeze.

And when in Autumn, gold and red,  
The apples hang on every side  
Their fragrance mingles with the fresh  
Delicious saltness of the tide.

## DISTANT GARDENS

**T**HOUGH tossed on foreign seas  
At stormy gloaming,  
Beneath New England trees  
My thoughts are roaming.

Below an azure sky  
A park lies dreaming,  
And there my gardens lie,  
With Summer gleaming.

The garden warm with noon  
And sweet with roses;  
A red rose falls, and soon  
A white uncloses.

The garden, walled and old,  
Where white flowers only  
Drink deep the moonlight cold  
On midnights lonely.

The garden near the coast  
Where broom is golden,  
And sunflowers flaunt and boast,  
To suns beholden.

I fear no sea-worn hours  
When dreams can capture  
From distant ways of flowers  
An earth-born rapture.

## THE DOLL

**I**N taffeta and silver lace  
The doll (that was myself) I dressed,  
I pinned a rose upon her breast  
And left her in a gilded chair.

A tried, mechanic toy; I knew  
Of old, that she could do and say  
All shallow things in shallow way:  
Then I fled swiftly from her ken.

Pale magic of December cold  
Bound all the wood; and overhead  
A net of star-filled skies was spread  
About the pathway of the wind.

Moon-shadows lay where, white and pure,  
The snow on rounded hill-top gleamed;  
And all that winter beauty seemed  
To breathe an ardent breath of June.

When I rejoined that smiling doll !  
One whispered, discontented word  
Within her ear was all I heard;  
“How silent you have been to-night !”

## NOVEMBER FLOWERS

**A** RED rose hung on its stem  
In my dying garden.  
“Why are you here in November,  
O Rose ?” I said.  
All around was silence and brown leaves moulder-  
ing,  
Burned box hedges and naked branches.  
But the one rose glowed in beauty  
And seemed to whisper :  
“To bring you thoughts of June.”

I found a honeysuckle  
On a high wall blowing.  
“Why are you here in November,  
Honeysuckle ?” I said.  
Fragrance reached me, heavy as incense smoulder-  
ing,  
The curled leaf-tendrils in joyance quivered,  
And again, as if enchanted,  
I heard the whisper :  
“To bring you thoughts of June.”

## THE CAPTIVE BUTTERFLY

**I**F I lie quite still in their net  
    Good fortune may befall—  
    They may think it was only a moth they  
        caught—  
    No butterfly at all !

But if once they learn of the blue  
    And purple of my wings,  
And their flash, when the rays of the noonday sun  
Light all their golden rings;

If once they know me the love  
    Of the rose that sheltered me,  
And the playmate of all the garden flowers,—  
    They will never set me free.

## A PRAYER FOR ESTHER

**A**S linden trees within this Summer garden  
Where all's in fair accord,  
Baptized with sun and dew, with bird  
songs joyous,  
So let her live, oh Lord !

And as a river holds the changing glories  
Of sunset, night and morn,  
Enriched with flights of dragon-fly and swallow  
So Lord, her heart adorn !

Preserve her mind a harp to all emotion,  
Itself, perhaps, as nought,  
But finely tuned, and instant in vibration  
To every holy thought.

So may she live, at one with earth's bestowing  
In every joyous breath;  
And pass, triumphantly, the cloudy barrier  
That severs life from death.

## UNITY

**I** AM one with the blade of grass and the  
giant tree,  
The birds and the flowers and roots are a  
part of me.

In vain within this, myself, have I sought my  
soul.  
It is absent, yet here, mere point in a mighty  
whole.

The beasts, in their strange and sluggishly worn  
disguise  
Pass by—and I see my soul is within their  
eyes.

For the wisest of men is twin to the earthy  
clod,  
All Life is but one; the unity—Thou—O God !



## LAURA AND I IN A MEADOW

**L**AURA, look at the shining grasses  
Here where the south winds blow !  
Thronging the meadow, frail but insistent,  
Staining it purple and rose.

Still the midsummer all around us,  
Misty the air—and sweet,  
Waves of wind flow over the grasses  
Seeming to break at your feet.

Star-like daisies and flax are smothered  
All in this jungle of grass;  
A net of wiry stems would entangle  
Your feet, if you ventured to pass.

But above the bees and butterflies hover  
Lightly on grasses and flowers—  
If we knew only this summer meadow  
What knowledge and joy would be ours !

## A SPANISH GIRL'S LOVE SONG

**W**HAT is warm in my veins like the sun in  
September;  
What swings me remote as the rose  
cloud above;  
What is yours to forget that is mine to remember?  
It is love, Rafael, it is love !

## MYRA

**H**ER soul is a garden;  
In formal beds its fairest roses blow.  
Some vanished hand has made geraniums  
grow,  
And scentless orchids.

Once pruned and tended,  
And trained in stiffly-charming, old-time bowers,  
They riot now—the frail and careless flowers  
That bud and perish.

At night, in the silence,  
Perhaps a nightingale his heart may sing,  
Or furry bat, on webbed, fantastic wing,  
Wheel near the lilies.

Walled is the garden,  
And he who seeks to enter comes too late,  
For chained and bolted stands the iron gate,  
With ivy strangled.

## THE LAST HOUR

**W**ITH rocking trees and slanting sun the  
very last hour dies  
On golden marsh and sea profoundly  
blue, in rose-hued skies.

My heart is restless, like the sea, and stormy, like  
the wind.

Will love go with us, Barbara, or leave we love  
behind ?

Oh, hour that stings with cold ! Oh, hour that  
woos with golden glow,  
That blinds with jewelled splendour of wave and  
cloud and snow !

Oh, hour supreme !—when once your bright  
December sun has set,

Will love be ours to hold, Beloved, or only to  
forget ?

## CONFESSION

**M**Y joys I seek by lonely seas,  
My friends among the ferns,  
The wind absorbs my coqueties,  
The rose my love returns.

The heaven of my hopes will be  
(If God such fate decrees)  
To give my life to roots and seeds  
And live again in trees.

But if the burden of my Self  
I must forever bear,  
Oh, let it be by hidden streams  
In heavenly meadows fair;

In fields which neither cherubim  
Nor saints nor angels know;  
Where daisies star the undying grass,  
And changeless poppies blow !

PART II  
SONGS IN CITIES



## THE HOUSE

**S**MALL the house, too small for an adventurer !  
(In it I was born, and here must die)  
From it I but see the habitations  
Of my neighbours, roofs beneath a sky !

If I lean without, at window hazarding,  
Curious unfriendly glances shine;  
(Such a paltry place I am inhabiting.  
Such pretence of keeping house is mine !)

Prisoned so, a householder unworthy,  
Discontented, still I keep the trust  
Left to me by older generations:—  
Mine this house until it falls in dust.

Dreams have come to me of space unlimited,  
Trackless meadows where the flowers shine fair,  
Day and night I long to be a wanderer  
Free to breathe the taintless outer air.

## THE PORTRAIT

**A** HUNDRED years ago I faintly smiled  
Upon a world I sought, yet half dis-  
dained,  
Upon the loves I prompted, but beguiled,  
(Too wise to yield, too proud to walk enchained)

I wrapped myself in artful mysteries  
Lest any dare interrogate my soul  
With bold too-searching gaze; I wandered free,  
Giving but half where others give the whole.

But art divined my secret; with its skill  
It made my painted prison—here I stand,  
For every rake forever more to gloat,  
For every imbecile to understand!



## THE GENET

**J**UNGLE sights and sounds and smells near  
the London street !

There I walked as in a dream, wearied with  
the heat.

Scores of fierce, indifferent eyes watched, in  
helpless rage,

For a liberator's foot and an opened cage.

Then I saw a drooping head, pensive but alert,  
And a smooth and spotted shape, sinuous, inert,  
Meek white marks beneath her eyes, pricked and  
pointed ear.

(This was no mere stranger cat !) And I seemed  
to hear,

In some way I once had learned in an age forgot,  
With some sense untrained, disused, till I knew  
it not,

Swift inquiry sent to me from a savage heart :

“ Sister, how did you and I grow so far apart ? ”

## THE TWO OLD GRANDFATHERS

**M**Y two old grandfathers sat before New  
England houses  
And looked over the fields of grain and  
wheat;  
The apple-orchards, the pastures, the woods and  
copses,  
The swamp land where cattle-prints showed in a  
black ooze,  
The stony hillside where sheep nibbled,  
And my two old grandfathers thought their  
silent thoughts.

One, gentle, humble, patient, meditated  
On the love of God for men, his children;  
On the peace of a certain eternity,  
The death of self, the brotherhood of man;  
On pain as a teacher, and the beauty of holiness  
And meek submission to unquestioned creeds.

The other, keen, scoffing, courageous,  
Dared to defy the minds of those around him,  
Protested, not by words but independent deeds  
Against the blind intolerance of fools,

Read his Voltaire to sound of Sunday church-  
bells,  
Smiled to himself, sitting alone, unasked for,  
At the disfavour of men—its weight and value.

Here am I—my hands full of the spoils of cities—  
My brain puzzled by creeds and theories,  
Groping, bewildered, for truth and justice.  
I try to free myself, to rise above conditions,  
To think my own thoughts, careless and un-  
trammelled—

But the thoughts of those two old grandfathers  
(Sitting alone before New England houses),  
Sway, alternately, my inner vision.  
I am held and hampered by conflicting forces.

## NIGHT, AND THE CURTAINS DRAWN

NIGHT, and the curtains drawn,  
The household still,  
Fate, with appointed strength,  
Has worked its will.

Close to the dying blaze  
We sit alone;  
Nought but the old days lost,  
All else—our own.

Far in the corners dim  
The shadows start;  
Near to your strength I cling,  
And near your heart.

Dearest—the whole world ends—  
Ends well—in this;  
Night, and the firelit dark,  
Your touch, your kiss.

## MIDNIGHT

**I** LIE awake and watch the misty snow  
Blown wide in dazzling whirls  
Through which the street-lights shine; the  
windows glow  
Like great rose-tinted pearls.

The Northern wind is now abroad; and roars,  
In slow and measured sweep,  
Like surf that beats, tumultuous, on the shores.  
To-night I cannot sleep,

For hark ! intangible, and unafraid,  
The Future faintly calls  
Like overtones from carven bells of jade  
Enshrined in silent halls.

## BEYOND KNOWLEDGE

**B**ELOVED, once your pale and flower-like  
face  
Smiled suddenly in London's crowded  
space,

A pleading vision, dreams within your eyes,  
And love upon your lips, in half-disguise.

You, whom I loved despite of all your fears,  
Within whose grave lie lost my golden years,

Could I but know that all with you is peace,  
Perhaps this agony of loss would cease.

Oh sweet ! Oh, wistful, long-remembered, lost,  
What dread frontier those timid feet have  
crossed !

In some far heaven, is your smile less sad ?  
And has your little shrinking soul grown glad ?

## HESTER

**T**HE richest joy of all her life had missed,  
The deepest griefs had ever passed her  
by,  
Her feeble search for good found little spoil,  
The hands which wrought no evil quiet lie.

Exceeding beauty never crowned her here,  
Not love, but only dreams, within her eyes,  
How great seems now the worth of all you missed?  
Poor Heart ! so childish once, and now so wise ?

Not tender, quite, in all her brief gray life,  
And yet with passing moods sometimes so sweet.  
Oh, friend, for whom fulfilment never came  
In life, was death decisive and complete ?

## LOVE

**L**ITTLE darling, I love you so,  
I watch, at every cruel word's surprise,  
The mist steal slowly to your scornful  
eyes,  
The hot red colour sweep across your cheek,  
I see you tremble, grow more worn and weak—

Little darling, I love you so !  
What joy to know I have within my will  
Such force to hurt, such potency to kill  
You, frail and small, unloving, still I hold  
Mine, mine, to torture till your years are told.



## A MAN SPEAKS

OUR little, rose-soft sisters,—  
    With laughing lips and tender eyes,  
    Our sisters—made of dew and flame,  
    Of sunlight, snow, and starlit skies,  
Drift on—for evermore the same.

Our little foolish sisters,—  
    Created fair, that love be born,  
And then to pain and torment hurled;  
    To first allure, and then, forlorn  
And puzzled, face an iron world.

Our little broken sisters,—  
    Too frail to meet their evil chance,  
Who made them fair enough for love  
    But all too weak for circumstance ?—  
The cry from earth to God above !

## A LIFETIME

**A** MONTH ago began my life,  
And yesterday I died—  
I know what life can hide  
Of bliss, of agony, of strife.

A month ago I heard them tell  
Your name, till then unknown,  
And now the month has flown:—  
Last night we said farewell.

## THE CANARY

**M**Y little yellow bird within his Chinese  
cage,  
That's carved with Mandarin's and twi-  
ning bloom,  
Pecks, greedy and alert, a fresh green lettuce-leaf;  
Then, spying me, as I come in the room,  
He cocks a shining head and, hopping on his  
swing,  
He greets me with a shrill and friendly tune.  
The morning sunshine slants through latticed  
window blinds;  
So, for us both, begins a day in June !

## OLD AGE

**I** HAVE finished the rose days of love  
And the white days of youth—  
I have come, by the road of Desire,  
To the gray land of Truth.

And the laughter and anguish are one,  
In the shadow of sleep,  
I murmur of love—"Did I blush?"  
And of pain—"Did I weep?"

## THE ARTIST

**O**NE word—the finished line;  
One sound—a perfect chord;  
One touch—the tints combine.

Alas ! a futile quest,  
The work imperfect still,  
The end ill-gotten rest.

O Art—forever veiled !  
O Truth !—forever dim !—  
And feeble hand—that failed.

## THE INSTRUMENT

**M**Y body in the dim, refracting lens  
Through which alone can knowledge  
    come to me,  
With these poor eyes alone my mind can see,  
Through this weak frame alone it comprehends.

Were I but furnished with an instrument  
Which perfectly transmitted shape and sound,  
I might go far beyond our present bound,  
See Truth indeed, and learn what Beauty meant.

## IN SPAIN

**I**N Spain the air grows languorous  
The suns more hotly burn  
And swallows wheel and turn  
Above the worn cathedral walls.

Along the burning roads of Spain  
No traveller makes haste,  
Red *faja* round his waist—  
A drowsy muleteer may pass.

At night, within the city's gates  
The shops are like a fair,  
Strange odours fill the air  
Of saffron, anisette, and musk.

Then, noisily, a shuffling crowd  
Strolls up and down the street.  
Bold eyes with bolder meet—  
To hide again behind a painted fan.

In Spain, when pallid morning comes  
The bells swing wide for mass,  
And black-veiled women pass  
Stealthy and swift along the cobblestones.

So long away ! yet one forgets  
The intervening years;  
For you these secret tears  
Oh land of prayers, devotion and disdain.



## INSPIRATION

**W**AS there no single word you wished to  
say,  
O unforgotten dead,  
Ere yet you paused, and fled ?  
Some word unspoken on that final day,  
Forever, now, unsaid ?

I sit alone on this September night,  
With useless, idle pen,  
O—wise beyond our ken !  
For you I wait, O soul, that took your flight  
Beyond the world of men !

My mind is yours, your purpose to fulfil,  
And yours this mortal hand;  
I wait and understand—  
All my endeavour meets your spirit will,  
I write what you command.

## LOVERS

**O**NE waited, Age, the lover,  
Till Alice could be won.  
His hour would time discover,  
The hour when youth was done;  
O fragrant, warm and tender,  
Rose lips and hair of gold,  
To Age must all surrender,  
And Age will clasp and hold.

But waited lover stronger,  
And over-bold and free.  
“My love shall guard you longer  
Than all eternity!”  
He spoke to Alice slowly,  
He kissed away her breath,  
She turned from Age, unholy,  
And fled away with Death.

## TWILIGHT

THE Avenue is heaped with drifts  
Of fallen snow,  
In driven icy mist the flakes  
Of crystal blow;  
And lines of muffled passers-by,  
Like mourners black,  
Move silent, stiff with cold, along  
A shovelled track,

Within, the air breathes roses, long  
In spices laid;  
The firelight shines on lacquered wood  
And old brocade.

I see my image in the glass  
So still, so lone,  
It might be painted on a screen,  
Or carved in stone.

Life, let me leave this scented room  
And wander free !  
And know one hour of cold and dark  
And liberty !

## THE NEW PARRAKEET

**H**IS little neck is ringed with rose,  
His narrow tail is blue of dye,  
He clambers upside down, and spreads  
The clipped green wings that cannot fly.

Then, motionless upon his perch,  
He stares with round, unmeaning eye,  
Uneasily I meet his gaze,  
His soul to mine makes no reply.

In what bright tropic was his birth ?  
What silent forest choked with green,  
What giant flowers, what sliding snakes,  
Have those round eyes unheeding seen ?

What tossing oceans did he cross  
To take up residence with me ?  
To live his lifetime near my side,  
An alien and a mystery !

## THE CAT

**L**IKE caryatid, still as stone,  
And black as ebony, the cat  
(Her tail around her toes curled flat)  
Sits upright on a cushioned throne.

Benign and innocently wise  
She looks; no thrills her whiskers stir,  
As glossy as a leaf her fur,  
As pale as moons her yellow eyes.

But I have seen her leave the house  
All evilly, at early dawn,  
To consummate, upon the lawn,  
The murder of a young field-mouse.

And when we sleep in chamber bounds  
I know she pads from floor to floor,  
And hears the landing clock strike four  
While still on her uncanny rounds.

## THE NURSE

**S**OMETIMES, when after endless days of  
pain,  
Our cries have grown too faint to reach to  
God,

When the great solitudes of heaven's peace  
Re-echo back to us our shrill despair,  
Then comes the tolerant and aged World,  
And lifts us up upon her ample knees,  
Murmurs within our ears her foolish tales,  
And fills our hands with bright futilities.

We know her false and trivial and vain,  
Absorbed in senile schemes and crude display;  
Yet, for a time, her presence eases care;  
A fond old nurse she seems, exacting nought  
But pretty ways, and mock obedience;

She knows no ills her favour may not cure,  
So, looking up within that mellow face,  
We force a smile and find forgetfulness.

## TO AN OLD FRIEND

**I**F I knew 'twas the very day,  
Oh, friend, so far away,  
What thing could I find to say ?

If I knew, that, in one more night,  
The world would pass from sight,  
What word should I dare to write ?

Yes, though the hour had come,  
My lips would still be dumb;—  
I should die as I lived, in sum.

I should pass from my place below,  
The years would come and go,  
Dear friend, you would never know !

## THE CLOSED ACCOUNT

**G**OD, I deliver up the arms  
You furnished me at the start  
With which to conquer a mighty world.  
Here is the cowardly heart;

Here is the feeble, woman mind,  
And the body, frail and small;  
Here are the senses, subtly keen  
(I render account of all).

Here is the pride that bade me fight,  
And the pride which wrought me woe;  
Now I have given count of all;—  
Into my grave I go.



## TO FIRE

**O** FIRE, thou free one !  
Thou god unspoiled !  
Attaining swiftly  
Where man has toiled,  
Thy formless glory  
No mind may see,  
Nor brooding fathom  
Thy mystery.

Destroyer, Father,  
Creator, King,  
Thy raging beauty  
A living thing,  
In desolation,  
Bright wings unfurled,  
Thy barren pathway  
Lies round the world.

All foul corruptions  
Thou makest clean ;  
In flame they vanish  
To space unseen ;

The shames of nature,  
The taints of earth,  
By thee transfigured  
Know airy birth.

O force supernal!  
O rose of heat!  
Incarnate beauty,  
Unrest complete!  
Remote from knowledge,  
Defying sense,  
Ah—whither speedest?  
And comest—whence?

More strange than jewels,  
More fierce than hate,  
Consummate wonder,  
Thy flames create.  
O perfect passion!  
O great desire!  
Receive my homage,  
Resistless Fire!

## AUDREY

**A**ND so, at last, the veil drops off our faces,  
The love you found too passionless and  
slight  
May lead you down to life's remotest spaces,  
May light you on till death's unbroken night.

At this dim gate the love that you were scorning  
Stands, fragile still, but tender—if you knew !—  
You who must pass beyond all love's adorning,  
Beyond all strong and weak, all false and true.

Farewell ! impatient lover, done with living,  
Receive my helpless tears where low you lie,  
Rest now the pardoned as, at last, forgiving.  
This is the very end of love—goodbye.

## THE OLD AGE OF GERALDINE

**N**OW days of love are over,  
Now dreaming days are done,  
Here waits no other lover  
But Death, the Silent one;  
Now beauty's overtaken  
And age usurps the days,  
Here love leaves life forsaken,  
Here's parting of the ways.

From out my glass, in sadness,  
A ghost looks now at me,  
Its smile is rout and madness,  
Its eyes fatuity.  
It views me still, undaunted,  
Where fairer shade I've seen;—  
A face that love once haunted,  
The face of Geraldine.

## THE STRANGER IN THE CITY

**S**OMETIMES among the weary timid faces  
I've learned as those of friends,  
The faces marked by cities for their uses,  
Their indeterminate ends,  
I see an elf-like smile and eyes of wonder,  
And know, with sudden start,  
A wanderer alien here, a joyous stranger  
From some bright land apart.

Return ! return ! Belovèd strayed from rapture,  
For hark ! from far away  
Come sounds like wind-stirred leaves, like falling  
water,  
Like birds at break of day.  
They call you back—where none are sad, or  
strangers,  
And where no world-wrought bars,  
With screening pale of precepts interwoven,  
Obscure the dancing stars.

## THE STATUE

**W**HEN last I drew the curtain  
The clock was striking ten,  
And groups of girls and men  
With voices shrill, uncertain,  
Went shuffling down the street.  
Before the café doors—  
A world the day ignores  
Found night and laughter sweet.

There sounded harsh and loud,  
The horns of passing cars;  
Before the closed bazaars  
A juggler charmed a crowd.  
The dewy air, that woke  
A cool and leafy scent,  
With human taints was blent,  
With trails of wine and smoke.

And what with all that scene,  
Tumultuous and strange,  
My fancy could not range  
To seek what once had been—

The past too vague had grown,  
The hour alone was good,  
On high the statue stood  
Forgotten and alone.

But when the night was old  
And sleepless still I lay,  
I rose and drew away  
The curtain—and behold !  
There fell a sheet of rain  
Upon the sleeping earth;  
Wiped out was all the mirth,  
And silence ruled again.

And through the silver haze  
The lights, a glory, shone  
Around the hero gone,  
The dead of other days.  
Serene it triumphed there,  
The city's very own,  
In immemorial stone,  
The statue in the square.

## NEW YORK

**I**RON and steel, immense, uncouth, resistless,  
Here is the Town!  
Labour and traffic rule it, wealth and  
commerce  
Weave its renown.

Mighty in power, deformed, unlovely, sordid,  
Soulless it seems;  
Come, O ye poets, artists, seers of visions,  
Deck it with dreams.

Crown it with rainbow images of wonder,  
Magic of art,  
Fruit of your brains and flower of all your fancy,  
Spoils of your heart.

Fling o'er its towers fantastic clouds of legend  
And wild desires;  
Let it stand in the dawn and sunset, vast, trium-  
phant,  
Mid opal fires.

Till it glows in the thoughts of men, a thing of  
wonder,  
Queen of its own,  
Girt with its shining rivers—splendid, swordlike,  
Venice outgrown!



## THE MANDOLIN

**H**ER soul was like a mandolin, inlaid  
With pearl and tortoise-shell and  
ivory;  
On that slight instrument I sometimes made,  
In idleness, a tinkling melody.

And often passers through the jostling throng  
Would stop to hear the ineffectual tune,—  
Half-sweet and half-perverse,—like insects' song  
That sounds the hot and drowsy spell of June.

But now, with strings unstrung, the mandolin  
Lies half-forgotten: will there come a day  
When other fingers, placed where mine have been,  
Another worthless melody will play ?

## AMBITION

**I** TOOK my little Love from her place so  
still and warm,  
And dragged her forth with me, just to keep  
her safe from harm.

The woods were dense and black, and the way  
was rough and long,  
It mattered not a whit, for my little Love was  
strong.

Just once, amid the dark, and the storm that  
followed after,  
I heard a childish plea for rest and love and  
laughter.

“We may not stop our course!” I exclaimed, in  
eager pride;  
“What matters weariness and pain when we are  
side by side!”

So dim it was and wild, with the rising wind and  
gale,  
I never knew at all that my Love was worn and  
pale.

I never felt her droop, till she slipped from out  
my hold,  
I never knew she fell—till I saw her still and cold.

And now I journey on, amid winter's snow and  
sleet,  
No little clinging hand to check, no little lagging  
feet.

## IRIS

**N**EVER a woman—you say !  
Never a wife—  
Only the rose of a day,  
A dream in a life,

Loved, and unconquered by love,  
Remote, in your arms,  
Eyes for some vision above,  
Deaf to alarms.

Love me or not, as you will !  
Prison me fast,  
Mine is the victory still,  
Freedom at last.

Love, with its tremulous fire,  
Burns in my heart,  
Still from a lover's desire  
I tarry apart.

Beauty the star of my sky,  
Visions my own,  
Touched by all joys as they fly,  
Still I'm alone.

Love is the loser, it seems,  
If to earth it belongs.  
I am a daughter of dreams.  
A mother of songs.

## HARVEST OF DREAMS

**A**RRAYED, as if for sepulchre,  
In shroud of woven mist,  
Within the narrow gate of night,  
A shape of dreams I kissed.

A love, born only of my dreams,  
And yet how rich am I !  
I know the moon of joy that hangs  
In sleep's embracing sky.

In cloudy, arrassed Courts, to hope  
And memory unknown,  
To pilgrims inaccessible,  
My heart received its own.

One instant's space (or was it years ?)  
The ties of earth were vain;  
One pulse-beat (or perhaps a life !)  
And then I woke again.

## CELIA

**H**ER fate to her was all surprise,  
She faced her tragic destiny  
With puzzled and pathetic eyes,—  
A butterfly blown out to sea.

## THE STAR SAPPHIRE

**I** DREAM of twilight, closing softly down  
With veil on veil of cool, delicious dye;  
From rose to blue, from blue to violet,  
Then Venus—pale within the purple sky.

## A PRAYER

**I**NFINITE Wisdom, Sanity and Holiness,  
Answering all who come to Thee in lowli-  
ness,  
Giver exhaustless to those who, selfless, plead,  
Give to my need !

Give me a knowledge born of sense and precision,  
Knowledge of truth and justice, power of decision ;  
Let me, in meekness, bid old faiths decline  
If new faiths shine.

Strength of the body, mind, and spirit give to me,  
Let all Thy joy and beauty live to me,  
Let me not fear to laugh, and to rejoice  
With singing voice.

And, when Thy will through stranger ways is  
leading me,  
Humbly I kneel for one thing only pleading Thee,  
Courage to face, unflinching, each new day,  
Courage—I pray.



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